

Preston Sturges, Noted Movie Producer, Dies

Preston Sturges, renowned Hollywood film producer-writer-director and Broadway playwright, died of a heart attack yesterday in his New York hotel room. He would have been 61 Aug. 28.

Sturges, who left Hollywood nearly 10 years ago after a series of reverses, had been living for several months in New York's Hotel Algonquin, a favorite of theatrical folk.

Sturges' most memorable efforts were the 1929 Broadway smash hit "Strictly Dishonorable," which ran two years, and "The Great McGinty," which brought him the 1940 Academy Award for best screen play.

Native of Chicago

Born Edmund Preston Biden in Chicago, Sturges was adopted three years later by his stepfather, Solomon Sturges, and thereafter used his name.

His mother was Mary Desti, biographer of dancer Isadora Duncan, who packed him off to Europe six months each year to absorb culture in the schools of France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy.

Sturges began his show



DEAD — Renowned film producer Preston Sturges dies in a New York hotel.

(AP Wirephoto)

business career in the late 1920s as a song writer and publisher. He became an assistant to Broadway producer Brock Pemberton and his first play, "The Guinea Pig," was produced in 1928.

His other stage plays included "Recapture," "Well

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PRESTON STURGES

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of Romance" and "Child of Manhattan." Then he wrote "The Big Pond" and "Fast and Loose" for Paramount in New York.

Universal beckoned him to Hollywood in 1932. Finding himself "off contract" after a few pictures, he sold a shooting script for "The Power and the Glory" to Jesse L. Lasky for an unheard-of \$17,500—plus royalties.

Sturges was credited with introducing the flashback technique in "The Power and the Glory."

He didn't really hit the jackpot, however, until he offered "The Great McGinty" to Paramount for \$1 — provided he could direct it. Paramount accepted and the picture, starring Brian Donlevy, not only won Sturges an Oscar but launched his directing career.

Writer-Director Efforts

His writer-director efforts included "Hail the Conquering Hero," "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek," "The Great Moment," "Unfaithfully Yours," "Beautiful Blonde from Bashful Bend" and "The French They are a Funny Race."

He also wrote "Diamond Jim," "We Live Again," "The Palm Beach Story," "Carnival in Flanders" and "Remember the Night."

In 1944, Sturges went into partnership with Howard Hughes in California Pictures Corp. They completed only one picture, "The Sin of Harold Diddlebock," starring Harold Lloyd, and were in the midst of a \$1 million venture, "Vendetta," when the partnership was dissolved in 1946.

For several years Sturges also owned and operated the Players, Sunset Strip theater-restaurant.

Wed Four Times

He was married four times and had three children. His first wife, Estelle Mudge Sturges, obtain a Mexican divorce, which was the basis of annulment of his 1930 elopement with Eleanor P. Hutton, society girl.

In 1938 he married Mrs. Louise Sargent Tevis, San Francisco society woman, and they had a son, Solomon. They were divorced in 1947.

In a ceremony on the stage of the Players in 1951, Sturges married Anne Margaret Nagle, an actress known as Sandy Mellen. They had two sons, Preston Jr. and Thomas Preston.